



LA VOZ

Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

December 2001

President's Message

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I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

Next year, we as an organization will celebrate our tenth anniversary. The 2002 conference will be a celebration of how we have assisted NRCS and USDA achieve conservation on private lands.

We will mark the occasion during the annual conference which has been scheduled for June 24 - 28,

2002, in Fort Worth, Texas, at the Holiday Inn (South). I would like to extend a personal invitation to all NOPHNRCSE members past and present to join us as we recognize the conservation contributions of this organization.

2002 should also be an opportunity for reflection of all that we have accomplished as an organization and what we have accomplished as individual members through our

association with NOPHNRCSE. The skills we've developed, the friendships we've made, and the lessons we've learned have given us an opportunity to develop into people who have become true assets to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Keep up the good work.

Rafael Guerrero,
President, NOPHNRCSE

Our Deepest Sympathy and Warm Remembrance

Valerie Berglund-Garcia
1968-2001

submitted by Tessa Garcia

A mid-afternoon car crash on Nov. 19, 2001, took the life of NOPHNRCSE member **Valerie Berglund-Garcia**, of Wadena, Minn.

Valerie started her career with NRCS in 1992 as a volunteer in the Stillwater, Minn., field office. In 1993, she was selected for the student trainee program. In February '94, as a student, she went to the Rochester, Minn., field office until March of '94 when she became a Soil Conserva-

tionist. Then in May of '96 she was selected for a District Conservationist position in Wadena, Minn.

In 1997, Valerie was awarded the Susan B. Anthony award for Minnesota. She served on the Minnesota Federal Women's Program from 1995-1997 and was a member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. She joined NOPHNRCSE in 1996.

Valerie was the HEPM in Minnesota from 1996-1999. Because of her warm, friendly personality she increased support for the program in Minnesota during her tenure. Through

her enthusiasm and devotion for the HEPM position and NOPHNRCSE, she was influential in increasing awareness of the program and its goals to many employees.

Valerie leaves behind her husband Cruz; two sons, Taylor, 10, and Derek, 4; family, and many friends.

Valerie is remembered for her graciousness and genuine kindness. And who can forget her long red hair. The address where condolences can be sent is below. Please send expressions of sympathy for Valerie to Mr. Harold Berglund, 16600 N. Upper 4th Street, Lakeland, MN 55043.



Luis Hernandez moves to Nebraska

submitted by Angel L. Figueroa

Luis Hernandez was promoted to the State Soil Scientist in Lincoln, Neb., in December.

Luis has been the Soil Survey Project Leader in New York City since 1996. His experience includes work for the USDA Forest Service, and soil scientist positions for NRCS in

Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Luis earned his Master of Soil Science degree at the University of Puerto Rico in 1989. More recently, he has been volunteering his time to NOPHNRCSE working on the Natural Resources Committee. Several of his papers have been accepted and presented at profes-

sional organizations in the United States.

Additionally he gained international experience in Latin America and Germany assignments. He was the recipient of the NOPHNRCSE Natural Resources Award in 1997.

Luis is accompanied by his wife, Maria Mercado, and their sons Luis Gabriel and Abraham Xavier.

September 11: A Perspective From One of Our Own

"Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail."

President George W. Bush addressing a joint session of Congress on Sept. 20, 2001.

Tony Rodriguez serves as a volunteer firefighter paramedic in the small west Texas town of Jayton, in Kent County. His full-time employment is with the USDA-NRCS, serving as a Soil Conservation Technician. Tony and several of the local men from the First Baptist Church in Jayton and Plains, Texas, acted in the capacity of a disaster relief team. They received clearance to depart for New York City on Oct. 18.

"We arrived at LaGuardia Airport where the security was intense." That evening I worked in "Kitchen 4" at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, washing cambros and preparing meals to be delivered by the Red Cross to the workers involved in recovery and cleanup.

On the second day in New York City, we were reassigned to the Brooklyn Navy Yard on a project

through the Mayor's office. Additional assistance for the project came from Ameri-cares, the American Red Cross, and the Southern Baptist Convention where everyone prepared for the first "Teddy Bear Project." Stuffed animals had been donated from across the country and they were stored in warehouses. "My job was driving a truck through New York City and across to Military Ocean Terminal in New Jersey delivering teddy bears to receiving points where they were counted, sorted, packaged, and delivered to ground zero, area hospitals, schools, fire stations, police stations, and the Emergency Operations Center."

It didn't take us long to realize the overwhelming need for additional transportation services. "Before long we were transporting water, food, medical supplies, gloves, hardhats,

stuffed animals, and anything else that was needed across the city everyday." Each evening we would go back to Floyd Bennett Field Kitchen where we worked washing dishes until midnight, only to start again the next day at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m.

Seeing the 5,000 American flags that were to be used in the memorial service on October 28 was very sobering. "As I walked through the warehouse with rows and rows of flags, knowing each flag symbolized someone lost in the tragedy was an unbelievable experience."

As we departed for Texas on October 25, "we left thinking if we affected the life of someone through a hot meal or a kind gesture, then through the darkness there is light and that light will guide us, and together we are not alone."



Hurricane Mitch Project Successful

from NRCS This Week for December 7, 2001

The Hurricane Mitch Project in Nicaragua ends Dec. 31, which means that NRCS soil conservationist **Carlos Suarez** and NRCS engineers **Yamilette Suarez** and **Ildefonso Chavez** will return to their jobs in Indiana and Arizona.

They have helped farmers in Nicaragua recover from the effects of the hurricane through a variety of projects, including road and rangeland restora-

tion, fruit tree reforestation, streambank stabilization, irrigation work, removal of debris and sediment from farmland, bee hive construction, capacity building, and many other types of assistance.

NRCS's success in Nicaragua can be attributed in large part to technical advisor **Manuel Ayala, Jr.** from the International Programs Division. Manuel managed Hurricane Mitch recovery activities in Nicaragua, Honduras,

Guatemala, and El Salvador. He also managed project activities for Hurricane Georges in the Dominican Republic.

NRCS helped bridge the complex working relationships between the national governments, the U.S. Agency for International Development, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners.

Since the project began, NRCS has completed 108 short-term assignments in Central America.

Silvopasture Publications Available in Spanish

Visit the National Agroforestry Center web site <http://www.unl.edu/nac> for more information on agroforestry or to order publications.

submitted by Doug Williams, National Forester

Silvopasture is managing timber and pasture in a single integrated system. Silvopasture is rapidly gaining acceptance in the science known as agroforestry — the intentional blending of agricultural and forestry production to accomplish economic, environmental, and social goals.

Edwin Mas, NRCS forester in Puerto Rico, recognized the value of having silvopasture information in Spanish and offered to translate a number of publications developed by the USDA National Agroforestry Center. The National Agroforestry Center is an NRCS and Forest Service

partnership that develops and transfers agroforestry technologies. Puerto Rico requests more material from the Center than any state, commonwealth, or territory.

Edwin provided the translations and the National Agroforestry Center printed the eight publications. One is the Working Trees for Agriculture, which defines agroforestry and shows what practices it includes. The other seven documents are on silvopasture and include two of the Working Tree series on livestock, four of the Agroforestry Notes that have been written on silvopasture, and a reprint of the Summer 1998 issue of the newsletter Inside Agroforestry, which covered

silvopasture.

Visit the National Agroforestry Center web site <http://www.unl.edu/nac> for more information on agroforestry or to order publications. The Spanish translated material is also available for PDF download from the web site. The Agroforestry Notes can be found under the topic of Silvopasture - <http://www.unl.edu/nac/afnotes.html>. The Inside Agroforestry newsletter is the summer 1998 - <http://www.unl.edu/nac/ia.html>. The three Working Tree brochures (Working Trees for Agriculture, Working Trees for Livestock and WT Livestock in the Southeast U.S.), can be found at <http://www.unl.edu/nac/pubs.html#brochures>.



Some Immigration Comparisons

*submitted by Roberto Mier,
NOPHNRCSSE Midwest
Representative*

During the last Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations, I was asked to make a short presentation on a Hispanic culture item.

I decided to step back into the past and relate how some Americans viewed immigration around the turn of the century 100 years ago, and compare it to what we hear and see today, especially related to the Hispanic community.

I spent an afternoon in the library and dug through books written between 1860 and 1925 and chose the four viewpoints that I could relate to the most.

I read a lot more than I am presenting in this article, and I encourage you to do some reading on your own to discover how the view of today's immigrants mirrors, in many ways, those of the past.

Here is the first quote: "...disadvantaged by their poverty. Because of their

strangeness, and their foreign speech, they have settled to breaking stone for highways, working on railroads, to menial service, or to day-labor in any capacity" (1870, of Irish and German immigrants).

Second viewpoint: "...publication of newspapers in any other language than English, is an undesirable, if not positively dangerous, practice. It is said that it prevents immigrants from learning the language of the country. That it fosters cultivation of un-American principles, notions and habits" (1869, of German language press in America).

Third viewpoint: "It is apparent how large a proportion of our foreign-born laborers have not even taken the first essential step toward assimilation. This evil is, of course, practically overcome in the second generation" (Immigration, 1925).

Fourth viewpoint: "The Jew has nearly always been

an immigrant and a problem. The fact that 20% of the students at Columbia University are Jews has led a number of Western boys say to me that they won't go to Columbia, because there are too many Jews there" (from the book "The Immigrant Tide," by Edward Steiner, Professor in Grinnell College, IA 1909).

With each of these I just exchanged the word immigrant for Hispanic, and I personally have seen the same thing occur with today's Hispanic immigrants.

Many of those doing the criticizing today probably had their own ancestors experience the same thing when they came to this country in the past.

This great country of immigrants experiences continuous cycles of settlement and adaptation. Let us receive those that are searching for new opportunities in the United States as we would want to be received in their lands.

The 2002
NOPHNRCSSE
annual conference
has been
scheduled for
June 24 - 28, 2002,
in Fort Worth,
Texas, at the
Holiday Inn
(South).

LESA Guide Translated to Spanish

There is a partnership effort between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado State University, and NOPHNRCSSE to have the LESA guide translated into Spanish, making it available for Spanish speaking audiences.

The guide should be completed by the end of the year.

NRCS will provide distribution to state offices nationwide.

The acronym LESA stands for Land Evaluation and Site Assessment.





Mana's Las Primeras Awards Gala Honors Latina Achievement

submitted by Sharyn Alvarez

On Friday, Nov. 30, Mana - A Latina organization held its Las Primeras 12th annual award gala, honoring Latina Achievement. The affair was held at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

Mana, whose mission is to empower Latinas through leadership development, community service, and advocacy, envisions a national community of informed Latina activists working to improve the quality of life for all Hispanics. Mana accomplishes its mission through two programs: *AvanZamos*, a chapter based, formal leadership development program for adult Latinas, and *Hermanitas*, a national initiative focusing on encouraging adolescent girls to stay in school and to pursue high academic goals.

The awardees are as follows:

Linda Alvarado, President and CEO of Alvarado Construction, Inc., a commercial general contracting firm based in Denver, Colo., and San Francisco, Calif. Ms. Alvarado received the Las Primeras Award for Business/Sports.

Anna Escobedo Cabral is President and CEO of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR). She is the first Latina to head a national coalition of Hispanic organization leaders. Ms. Cabral received the Las Primeras Award for Community.

The Honorable Sila M. Calderon (D-PR), born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was elected Governor of Puerto Rico on January 2, 2001. She became the first woman elected to that position. Governor Calderon received the Las Primeras Award for Leadership.

Nellie Kaniski is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and President of Mana-Orange County, Calif. Ms. Kaniski is a retired nurse and now works providing training to young Latinas. Ms. Kaniski received the Las Primeras Award for Military Service.

Elizabeth Vargas of ABC News 20/20 and Prime Time Live works as a correspondent. She received the Las Primeras Award for Communications.

Anna Maria Arias was selected to receive the Las Primeras Special Award. Ms. Arias was the founder and editor of *LATINA Style Magazine*, the first national magazine to cover Hispanic working women. On October 1, 2001, Ms. Arias lost her battle with aplastic anemia and died from complications related to a bone marrow transplant procedure.

NRCS Mission:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

NRCS Has a New Mission Statement

The new mission statement was posted electronically to the NRCS Electronic Directives System. The policy is 130, Part 400, Subpart A, Mission Statement, (Amend. 5, dated

December 2001), and is located at http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/EDSnf/GM_130_400_a.htm.

The statement is

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.



Rancho Las Escobas

*submitted by Homero Vera,
Publisher, El Mesteno - a
magazine about Mexican-
American Culture and
Heritage in South Texas and
Mexico, May 2001, Volume
4, Issue 44*

Rancho Las Escobas in Starr County was founded by don Jose Felipe Guerra Hinojosa and dona Josefa Gonzalez de Guerra around the 1850s. The main seat of the ranch was located on procion number 109, original grantee Joseph Salvador Garcia, of the jurisdiction of Cd. Camargo, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Don Felipe and Dona Josefa were married at the Inmaculada Purisima Concepcion Catholic Church in Cd. Mier on May 12, 1845. They moved shortly thereafter and were some of the first citizens of the city of Roma, Texas.

In the census of 1860, don Felipe's occupation was listed as a stickraiser with \$3,000 in real estate and \$2,000 in personal estate. His herdsman, or caporal, who took care of the ranch was Jesus Ramirez. His father-in-law, don Prudencio Gonzalez was also a citizen of Roma and also a stockraiser with \$4,000 in real estate and \$3,000 in personal estate.

In the same census, don Felipe and dona Josefa had three children: Emeteria, 14, born in Mexico; Jesus, 11, and Emilia, 3, both

born in Texas.

Don Felipe started purchasing large tracts of land from descendents of the original grantees. He first appears in the Starr County tax rolls in 1866 with 5,950 acres of the Antonio Sanchez porcion #69 and five town lots in the city of Roma. He also had 247 head of horses, 350 head of cattle and 1,500 head of sheep for a taxable value of \$10,250.

By the 1870 census, the Guerra's were living at the ranch at Las Escobas. There were six houses with six families consisting of 25 males and 15 females. Two more children were born into the family, Francisco, 7, and Diodoro, 4, both born in Texas.

Construction was started on the main house, which was made of large sillar (caliche) blocks and built in two sections. Evidence to the fact with the inscribed date of 4/18/ 1870 and the initials FGH y JG de Guerra imbedded into the viga or beam. The second section of the house was finished in 1880.

Undoubtedly, the stone mason who constructed the main house was Rafael Fuentes and his three sons; Benito, Feliciano, and Adolfo, who were listed as stone mason and laborers respectively in the census of 1880 when the house was finished.

Don Felipe and Dona

Josefa cared about the education of their children and ranch workers as they taught the English language as well as their native Spanish. Las Escobas was probably one of the first ranches to have a bi-lingual education system.

The school at Las Escobas had two teachers. Ezra B. Houston was the teacher who taught the children in English and lived on the ranch as a boarder. He was also the 1880 census enumerator for Starr County. The Guerra's son-in-law, Jose Angel Salinas, who married their daughter Emilia, was the other teacher and taught the children in Spanish.

By the early 1180s, don Felipe had established himself as one, if not, the largest rancher in Starr County. Through the 1860s, 70s, and 80s, he has bought most of the porciones number 69, 103, 109, 110, 111, eight state land scripts of 640 acres each, three tracts of the cuevitas land grant; one of 4,500 acres and the others of 340 acres and 31 acres with house, corrals, and well, two other state scripts of 385.5 and 393 acres for a total of 46,450 acres.

According to the Starr County tax rolls from 1866 through 1884, the last year Guerra appeared on the rolls, he maintained an average herd of 280 horses,

(Continued on page 7)

Starr County is located in south Texas. According to the 2000 Census, its population was 53,597 with 97.5% of those residents of Hispanic or Latino origin.

2002 membership dues are now being accepted. Membership forms will be available on the NOPHNCSE homepage soon.

If you have questions, contact Sonny Vela via e-mail at sonny.vela@tx.usda.gov or (915) 837-5864 extension #3.

Rancho Las Escobas, cont.

422 cattle, 1,564 sheep, and 528 head of goats. His best year was 1883 when he had 641 head of horses, 1,404 head of cattle, 1,800 sheep, and 500 goats. He also was listed as having five carriages. His net worth for the year 1884 including all livestock, land, and personal items was \$60,480.00.

Don Felipe passed away in March of 1891 and is buried in a crypt close to the main ranch house at Las

Escobas. He will go down in history as being one of the pioneer cattlemen who tamed the harsh brush country of Starr County to make it profitable for himself and for future generations to continue in the ranching business.

In 1894 the Potrero de las Escobas which consisted of the prociones 109, 110, 111, and numerous surveys was surveyed and partitioned into thirteen shares with dona Josefa and her

five children receiving the bulk of the estate and the rest going to other Guerra family members. The family still retains the headquarters of Las Escobas today.

Las Escobas is named for the plant called escobilla, which is a native plant in the area from which settlers used to make brooms.

Today this ranch belongs to the family of **Salvador Salinas**, Executive Vice President of NOPHNCSE.

NOPHNCSE Scholarship Program Challenge

submitted by Mario A. Morales, Chairman, Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee

The NOPHNCSE Scholarship Program is in dire need of your help!!!

As all of you are aware, NOPHNCSE was unable to hold its Annual Training Conference this year. This resulted in a crisis for our Scholarship Award Program since we were also unable to host our Scholarship Night, which is when we raise a significant portion of our funds for our Scholarship and Endowment Fund Program through a Scholarship Auction and other events. Without your assistance, it will be difficult to continue the Scholarship Award Program.

The NOPHNCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee, the National Council, and I are

asking for membership assistance with this significant portion of our mandate, as stipulated in our organizational charter. We are asking the membership to please make a "targeted donation" to the 2002 NOPHNCSE Scholarship Award Program to continue this mandate. Please note that all funds received will only be used to fund the 2002 Scholarship Awards Program.

In 1999, we awarded three \$600 scholarships. In 2000 and 2001, we awarded three \$700 scholarships each year. This should be the fourth year that scholarships will be awarded. It is imperative that we keep our scholarship program active. The Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee would like to again fund three \$700 scholarships, but in order for us to accomplish this we need

your targeted donations (note: any donation made before Jan. 1, 2002, is tax deductible for tax year 2001).

The NOPHNCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee and the National Council are challenging the membership to raise \$2,000 for the stated purpose. (Example: if 100 members donate \$20 each, this goal can be achieved). This amount plus revenues from the Scholarship Endowment Fund will make it possible for us to maintain our scholarship program. Please make every effort possible to assist us with this endeavor.

For more information contact Mario A. Morales at 505-527-6993 (office) or 505-523-5650 (home). Please mail donations to Mario at 629 Shadow Valley Dr.; Las Cruces, New Mexico 88005.



Until The Lion Learns To Write, Tales Of The Hunt Will Always Glorify The Hunter

submitted by Sharyn Alvarez, Chair, Communications Committee, and Ray Margo, Chair, Partnerships Committee

La Voz needs you.

Writing for La Voz provides an opportunity for us to highlight our strengths and shore up our weaknesses. How? By sharing what you know, by showcasing your promotions, interesting details and temporary assignments, awards, new positions and educational achievements. Shore up our weaknesses? How? By showcasing how you solved a problem, learned from your mistakes, share all that you have garnered from a tip, good book or a class taken. La Voz can be a forum for highlighting our history.

As we commemorate our tenth anniversary and look back on our achievements lets take some time to highlight not only the accomplishments of NOPHNRCSE but the accomplishments of all Hispanic employees of SCS and NRCS. NOPHNRCSE was established ten years ago, however, Hispanic employees have contributed to USDA and NRCS for many years. Today let's look at a contribution made in 1972. **Ray Margo**, Chair of the Partnerships Committee, sent a list of woody plants in south Texas. The scientific, standard and Spanish names were assembled by Elias J. Guerrero in 1972. Mr. Guerrero was a District Conservationist in Rio Grande, Texas, and later became an RC&D Coordi-

nator for the Rio Bravo RC&D (Webb, Zapata, Jim Hogg, and Starr counties). The late Mr. Guerrero is the father of **Rafael, Eduardo, and Gilberto Guerrero** who have also made careers with NRCS. Due to its length, we have printed a partial list. For copies of the complete list, contact Ray Margo. The complete list will be on our webpage soon.

Use La Voz to as your forum to tell how Hispanic NRCS employees contribution to conservation in America. We need you to provide short, concise articles that make your points quickly and succinctly. We need you to inform and educate us. We need you to make us say aha!

To submit articles for La Voz, email them to Sharyn Alvarez, Communications Committee Chair, at sharyn.alvarez@usda.gov

Scientific, Standard, and Spanish Names of Woody Plants In South Texas Rev. March 1972

Scientific	Standard	Spanish
Acacia		
amentacea	Blackbrush acacia	Chaparro prieto
berlandieri	Guajillo	Guajillo
farnasiana	Huisache	Huisache
greggi	Catclaw acacia	Una de Gato
Salix sp	Willow	Sauce
Sapindus drummandi	Western soapberry	Jaboncillo
Schaefferia cuneifolia	Desort-yaupon	Capul
Sophora secundiflora	Mescalbean	Frijolillo
Taxodium mucranatum	Cypress	Sabino
Ulmus crassifolia	Cedar elm	Olmos
Varilla Texana	Texas varilla	Saladilla
Yucca treculeana	Trecui yucca	Pita
Zanthoxylum fagara	Lime pricklyash	Colima



Hispanic vs. Latin: A Discussion On The Meaning Of The Words

*submitted by Jose Valadez,
former Hispanic Emphasis
Program Manager,
Montana*

written by Al Sosa. Mr. Sosa served as the first President of the Hispanic Genealogical Society of New York and later as vice president and treasurer while also serving on its Board of Directors. Al Sosa is also the host of the Hispanic Genealogy Forum (HGF) and is the editor of Hispanic Genealogy Online. Mr. Sosa also served on the Board of Directors of the Puerto Rican Cultural Heritage House in New York City.

"Many people are confused as to the proper use of the terms Hispanic and Latin," according to Al Sosa, host of the Hispanic Genealogy Forum.

Many people are confused as to the proper use of the terms Hispanic and Latin. Spanish speakers are themselves in disagreement as to how these two terms should be applied. Both sides of this contentious issue feel very strongly about their positions and pose valid arguments. The following is an attempt to settle the issue in a scholarly rather than emotional fashion. The author believes that if we know what these words originally meant, it might be easier to draw the appropriate conclusions and use the words as they were intended to be used.

The Origins

The first time that we hear the word Latin was in the time just prior to the Roman Empire in what is now called Italy. A tribe of people who called themselves Latins appeared in Italy and began to subjugate their neighbors. Their country was called Latium, their capital city was Rome and the language they spoke was, of course, Latin. Later, when the Romans invaded Iberia (Spain), they found many different tribes there.

Eventually they conquered most of the peninsula, and in the southwest of Iberia they found a city called Hispalis (Seville). It is not clear if Hispalis was originally Greek or Phoenician. From the name it appears that the city was originally a Greek colony (Hispalus was a mythical Greek hero who was related to Hercules). At the time of the Roman conquest, the city was occupied by a tribe of Celtiberians, a mixture of Celts and Iberians.

The Romans eventually annexed the Iberian Peninsula and made it a province which they called Hispania, most probably named after the city of Hispalis. Later, the Romans divided their new province

into two parts, Hispania Citerior (closer Spain) and Hispania Ulterior (farther Spain). Although there were other divisions later, these were the official names of Iberia throughout the Roman Empire, and would remain so until the fall of the Empire.

It should be understood then, that the word España comes from the Latin word Hispania and not the other way around. The word Hispania then, in ancient times referred to the people and eventually to the culture of the Iberian Peninsula.

As Rome added more territory to her empire, she began to impose her language and ways on the conquered people. This eventually led to the creation of several new languages, which are now called Latin or Romance languages (Romance as used here has nothing to do with amorous relations, it is a reference to the city of Rome). Several Latin countries were also created, France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Albania and Romania. In summation the term Latin originally referred to the following:

1) The name of the tribes of people which eventually started the Roman Empire and the

(Continued on page 9)



Hispanic vs. Latin, cont.

name of the language that they spoke.

2) The official language of the Roman Catholic church.

3) An individual from a country that speaks a Latin language.

The Modern Meanings

The modern use of the term Hispanic is given to us by the need of the U.S. government to count its increasing number of Spanish speaking people. The U.S. government realized early on that these Spanish-speaking people did not have any unifying physical characteristics such as color of skin, texture of hair, shape of eyes, etc. As such, these Spanish speakers could not be categorized as members of a single race.

In addition to that, these Spanish speakers did not even share a common religion. In order to count its Spanish-speaking citizens, the U.S. government needed a category other than “White,” “Black,” “Native American” or “Asian”. Thus, the term “Hispanic” was included on all government forms and applications requiring such information. Eventually, the

term made its way into the private sector as well.

This practice, however, has led to some additional confusion since the other categories “White”, “Black”, etc. refer to race while “Hispanic” was intended to refer to a cultural or ethnic group.

In Europe Latins are generally accepted to be individuals coming from a country where a Latin language is spoken. Individuals coming from France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Albania and Romania are called Latins. The European view of Latin America is simply as a geographical location. Someone from Venezuela, for instance, will be seen as Latin American but not necessarily as Latin. A subtle, but nonetheless, accurate distinction. The European view of the term Hispanic is fairly precise. It refers to Spain, its culture, the Spanish-speaking people of Latin America and/or their culture.

It is in the United States that the terms Latin and Hispanic are often misapplied and confused. The terms mean different things to different people. In some areas of the United States, for instance, Puerto

Ricans and Cubans are considered Latinos, but Mexicans and Colombians are not. In other areas, Latin and Latino mean different things.

I have even heard some individuals say that the term Hispanic was created by the “Anglos” in order to lump us all together and in the same breath say that the term Hispano is good because it tends to bring the Spanish speaking people together. Go figure.

So, What Are We — Latin or Hispanic?

Some of us are Latin, some of us are not, but all of us are Hispanic. As genealogical and historical researchers, and especially for the sake of future researchers, I think it's our responsibility to assure that our culture and people are portrayed as accurately as possible. If we must be categorized, then let us be categorized with an inclusive rather than an exclusive term. A term that unites us rather than divides us.

Let us use the term Hispanic. It includes all of us accurately without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin.

“If we must be categorized, then let us be categorized with an inclusive rather than an exclusive term. A term that unites us rather than divides us,” according to Al Sosa, host of the Hispanic Genealogy Forum.